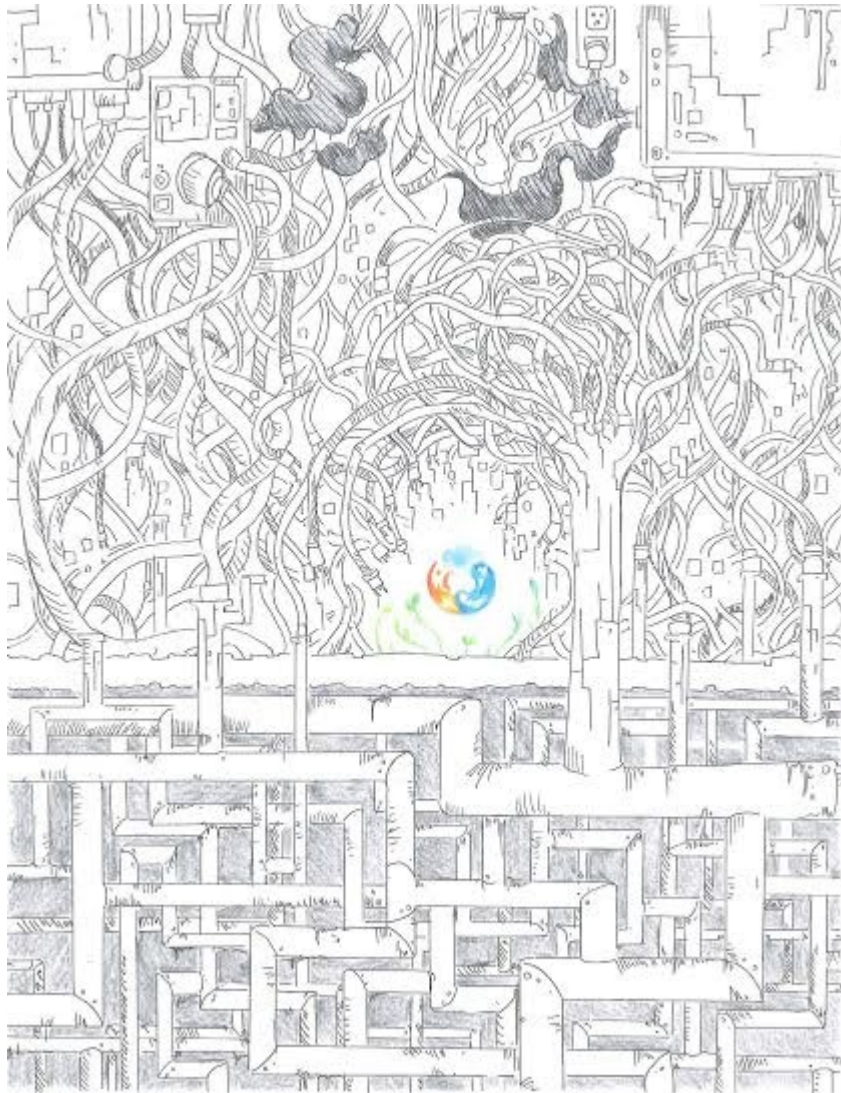


32 ♦ Art



Elements, Jessica Chen
Drawing

**Elements is a collaborative art and poetry submission by
Jessica Chen and Nathan Stables.*

Elements
Nathan Stables

We once spoke of harmony as an attainable goal
and reveled in the elegant differences between the nations.
There was never a world without conflict or enviable power,
nor was there a real danger of losing touch with the most basic elements
of nature, of reason and of living.

Since then, we are more connected than ever, unified through
virtual portals and linked by an eerie reflection
of artificial light in our eyes. A revolution of multimedia;
everything changed when the screens took over.

Our grasp of the ancient ways, maybe not entirely lost, is certainly
shaky in the hands of change. Instinct shouldn't need convincing.
Our minds move disjoint from our actions, too fast for our will and senses.
Society continues to move forward, leaving humanity stagnant and stuck,
betrayed under a coat of metallic dust.

Turn to look out at the world. Can you feel the
squish of the mud as your feet sink down? Does the wind whip your hair
wildly or blow kindly onto your neck?
Place yourself back in those moments of striking realization.
A fall downpour drenching your
clothes, reminding you what it means to feel alive and sentient. To walk
from a chilly shadow into warmth and the sunlight stroking your back.

Can you feel it? The pulse of the most basic tenets of life? Or are you
removed from the very elements that make living possible? There is
a plague of separation, a loss of natural sensation.

No singular force can salvage a society that has become so far-removed.
The Earth will cry and people will suffer from our shortcoming.
The ground may quake, the land ablaze by purifying fire, great
waves to wash away evidence of our shameful deeds, boisterous gusts
to blow away signs of our so-called advancement and marvel.

For too long we've fought what's always been inside. No feat of
engineering can replace the elements of living, so why do we try
to take advantage of or ignore the facets of our making? Time is
the one element we can't bend to our devices, and the least forgiving.

This is not a public service announcement nor should we feel guilty or lost without action. Time may not waver or wait, but there still is time to change, maybe to regress.

It will take time to disconnect, clean off our metallic obsessions, unwire our virtual selves. We don't need to dance through ceremonial flames or christen our new lives in cleansing water. We needn't construct clay obelisks out of reverence or hike skyward to the clouds and experience thinning air to appreciate the beauty in breath.

What we need. To Feel. To Laugh. To Love. A change and an embrace of the past, the present, and everything we can accomplish. To acknowledge what we came from and to pay homage to the elements that make us human and worth fighting for.